



Religiosity and Cultural Identity: A Study among Mizo Adults

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Abstract

The primary aim of this study is to ascertain the levels of religiosity and cultural identity among Mizo adults, as well as to explore the potential association between these variables. The sample pool comprised a total of N=180 individuals, drawn from three distinct districts within Mizoram: Aizawl, Lunglei, and Kolasib. Within this sample, participants were stratified into three age categories: early-aged adults (aged 20-39 years), middle-aged adults (aged 40-59 years), and late-aged adults (aged 60 years and above), with each age group consisting of 60 individuals, evenly distributed by gender with 30 males and 30 females. The analysis of descriptive statistics unveiled moderately elevated levels of religiosity and cultural identity across the sampled population. Given the satisfactory adherence to normality assumptions in the data, parametric statistical techniques were employed for further analysis. The t-test yielded non-significant gender disparities ($p < .05$) in both religiosity and cultural identity measures, indicating comparable levels between males and females. Correlation coefficients revealed no significant relationship between the two variables among Mizo adults. Furthermore, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicated significant differences ($p < .05$) in the variable of religiosity across the three age groups, highlighting potential age-related variations in religiosity levels among Mizo adults. Post hoc test shows that Mizo young adults have significantly lower religiosity scores compared to Mizo middle-aged and older adults. Mizo Middle-aged and older adults have higher religiosity scores than young adults, with these differences being statistically significant ($p < .05$).

Keywords: Religiosity, Cultural Identity, Mizoram.

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Introduction

Mizos, or the Mizo people, constitute ethnic groups primarily speaking Tibeto-Burman languages, and their homeland resides within the picturesque Lushai/Mizo Hills, nestled in the northeastern expanse of India. However, their influence extends far beyond the borders of contemporary Mizoram, as many Mizos have established settlements in neighboring states like Tripura, Assam, Manipur, and Nagaland, as well as regions within Myanmar and Bangladesh. This migratory tradition of the Mizos has facilitated a rapid expansion of Mizo territories during the 18th and 19th centuries. Among the notable Mizo groups are the Lushai (sometimes erroneously used to represent the entire Mizo community), Pawi (Lai), Lakher (Mara), and Hmar (Britannica, T, 2022).

Traditionally, Mizo villages are perched amidst hilly terrains. These villages, typically comprising various distinct clan members, served as autonomous political units governed by a chief aided by elders. The social fabric of Mizo society originally encompassed chiefs, commoners, serfs, and slaves, often war captives. During the colonial era, the British authorities prohibited feuds and headhunting, administering the region through indigenous chiefs (Britannica, T, 2022).

In contemporary times, the state of Mizoram boasts a diverse religious landscape, including Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and others. According to the 2001 census, Christianity dominates with approximately 87% of Mizoram's population, while Buddhists constitute around 8.5%, and Hindus approximately 2.7%. Notably, the non-Christian populace in Mizoram is typically non-Mizo or not part of the ethnic Mizo tribes, suggesting that the Christian percentage among Mizo ethnic groups may be higher. Mizoram currently stands as one of India's most peaceful states, boasting the nation's second-best literacy rate (Census 2011). Initially, Mizos adhered to a religion known as animism, sometimes referred to as Lushai animism, which was indigenous to the region. This monotheistic ethnic religion was widely practiced among the Mizo people until British missionaries converted them to Christianity (Bhattacharjee, 2017).

Religiosity

Religiosity has historically played a pivotal role in the development of cultures and societies. It shapes individual beliefs, behaviors, and personalities, influencing actions and contributing to cultural norms. Religiosity, also referred to as religiousness, encompasses a person's devotion or piety towards divinity, reflecting various dimensions of religious beliefs and practices. However, rigid forms of religiosity may exhibit extreme dedication to religious traditions, sometimes leading to negative consequences (Gallagher & Tierney, 2013).

Engagement in religious practices, known as religiosity, encompasses various dimensions that reflect an individual's commitment to their faith. This includes adherence to religious rituals, ceremonies, and observances as prescribed by their particular belief system (Stark & Glock, 1968). Religiosity also encompasses the depth of personal faith and belief in a divine or transcendent power, including religious convictions and the perceived connection to the divine (Allport & Ross, 1967). Additionally, it involves the internalization and application of

moral and ethical values derived from religious teachings, such as compassion, honesty, and altruism, in daily life (Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993).

Furthermore, religiosity extends to community engagement and religious identity, reflecting the degree of involvement in religious communities and a sense of belonging to a religious group (Hoge & Roozen, 1979). It may also involve an individual's existential and spiritual quest, including inquiries into the meaning of life, the pursuit of spiritual growth, and the quest for ultimate truth and enlightenment (Hood, Hill, & Spilka, 2009). Finally, religiosity is influenced by cultural norms, social upbringing, and environmental factors, leading to variations across different cultural contexts and societies (Smith, 2003).

Cultural Identity

Cultural identity, on the other hand, revolves around an individual's sense of belonging to a cultural group. It encompasses aspects such as ethnicity, religion, nationality, social class, and locality, shaping self-concept and self-perception. Cultural identity forms the core of a person's identity, influencing how they perceive themselves and interact with the world. It is influenced by diverse factors like ancestry, language, education, profession, family, and political attitudes, contributing to the formation of a person's overall identity. Thus, cultural identity is dynamic and multifaceted, influencing various facets of an individual's life and societal roles (Ennaji, M. 2005).

Ennaji (2005) characterizes cultural identity as "the sense of belonging to a cultural group, integral to an individual's self-perception and concept, intertwined with factors like ethnicity, religion, nationality, social standing, generational affiliation, geographic origin, or any social grouping with its distinct cultural attributes." Bradshaw (2021) proposes that cultural identity entails "a sense of affinity with a collective sharing similar outlooks and perspectives. Within the framework of the "communication theory of identity," Guerrero et al. (2017) elucidate cultural identity as "the fundamental aspect of an individual's sense of self, influencing how they perceive themselves and interact with their environment." Holliday (2010) suggests that cultural identity encompasses a multitude of elements including "religious beliefs, ancestral heritage, physical appearance, language, socioeconomic status, educational background, occupation, skills, familial ties, and political viewpoints," all contributing to the development of an individual's cultural identity.

Rationale of the Study

The indelible mark left by Christian missionaries in Mizoram has profoundly influenced the religious fabric of the region, particularly in terms of Christian religiosity intertwining with the cultural identity of the Mizo people. This profound influence is evident in various facets of Mizo traditions, as observed by Pachuau (2014), indicating a significant fusion of religious beliefs with cultural practices. Given this intricate relationship between religiosity and cultural identity, the primary aim of this research endeavor is to delve into the intricate dynamics that govern this relationship within the Mizo community.

Moreover, the study aims to discern whether any discernible disparities exist in religiosity and cultural identity concerning demographic variables like gender and age groups. This inquiry into the interplay of religiosity and cultural identity holds paramount importance as it sheds light on the contemporary status of the Mizos in relation to these critical aspects of their societal fabric. Additionally, the findings gleaned from this study have the potential to enrich the existing body of literature on this subject matter, offering valuable insights into the complex interconnections between religiosity and cultural identity within the Mizo community.

Objectives

- a) To find out the levels of Religiosity and Cultural Identity among Mizo adults.
- b) To find out if any significant gender differences exist on Religiosity and Cultural Identity among Mizo adults.
- c) To find out if a significant relationship exists between the variables of Religiosity and Cultural Identity.
- d) To find out if any significant differences exist among the three age groups with the measures of Religiosity and Cultural Identity among Mizo adults.

Hypotheses

- 1) All measures are expected to be high among Mizo adults.
- 2) Females are expected to be higher on Religiosity but lower on Cultural identity than male samples.
- 3) A significant relationship between the variables of Religiosity and Cultural Identity is expected.
- 4) Significant age group differences are expected to exist on religiosity but lower on Cultural identity.

Methodology of Study

The study employed quantitative research methodologies, employing objective measurements to gather statistical, mathematical, or numerical data via structured questionnaires. These data sets were subsequently subjected to rigorous analysis through computational techniques. In order to test the hypotheses posited within the study, suitable statistical methods were employed. The collected data underwent thorough examination and interpretation using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, facilitating comprehensive analysis and inference generation. Through the systematic application of quantitative research techniques and statistical tools, the study aimed to derive meaningful insights and draw valid conclusions from the gathered data.

Sample of Study

The present study consisted of 180 participants within the age range of 20-60 years and above from the districts of Aizawl, Lunglei and Kolasib, with males (N=90) and females (N=90). The sample under study was further divided into three groups based on Erik Erikson's stages of psychosocial development (Erikson, E.H. 1950) (Knight, Zelda Gillian, 2017). Early adults (20-39), Middle adults (40-59) and Late adults (60 and above). Sampling

was done using the cluster random sampling method. Each cluster being the district capitals of Mizoram.

Design of the Study

The study was designed using a 2x3 factorial design, incorporating two primary factors: gender and age groups. Gender was divided into two levels, encompassing both females and males, while age groups were classified into three distinct categories: early adults (aged 20 to 39), middle adults (aged 40 to 59), and late adults (aged 60 and above). This factorial design allowed for the examination of interactions between gender and age groups, providing a comprehensive understanding of how these demographic variables may influence the variables under investigation. By incorporating multiple levels of each factor, the study aimed to capture the nuances and complexities of these demographic characteristics and their potential impact on the outcomes of interest.

Tools Used

The Duke University Religion Index (Koenig, H. G., & Büssing, A. 2010).

The Duke University Religion Index (DUREL) is a five-item measure of religious involvement, and was developed for use in large cross-sectional and longitudinal observational studies. The instrument assesses the three major dimensions of religiosity. Those three dimensions are organizational religious activity, non-organizational religious activity, and intrinsic religiosity (or subjective religiosity). The DUREL measures each of these dimensions by a separate “subscale”. The overall scale has high test-retest reliability (intra-class correlation = 0.91), high internal consistence (Cronbach’s alpha’s = 0.78–0.91), high convergent validity with other measures of religiosity (r ’s = 0.71–0.86), and the factor structure of the DUREL has have now been demonstrated and confirmed in separate samples by other independent investigative teams. The DUREL has been used in over 100 published studies conducted throughout the world and is available in 10 languages.

Cultural Identity Clarity Scale (Usborne and Taylor 2010)

The Cultural Identity Clarity Scale (CICS), devised by Usborne and Taylor in 2010, stands as a noteworthy instrument designed to gauge an individual's cultural identity or the clarity thereof. Drawing inspiration from Campbell's self-concept clarity scale, Usborne skilfully adapted this scale to align with cultural dimensions. Comprising 8 items, the CICS employs a 10-point scoring system to assess an individual's cultural identity clarity. Notably, the scale demonstrates commendable reliability, as evidenced by a high Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .85, indicating its robustness and consistency in measuring cultural identity clarity.

Analysis and Interpretation

The findings of the present study and their interpretations are presented in the following objectives.

Objective 1: To find out the levels of Religiosity and Cultural Identity among Mizo adults.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Cultural Identity	52.42	11.19	-.502	.181	.416	.360
Religiosity	19.45	4.84	-.920	.181	.485	.360

Table 1 shows the levels of the variables assessed, it revealed moderately high levels among the samples with the measures of Religiosity and Cultural Identity, therefore Hypothesis 1 is accepted as it assumes high levels with all the variables used. As the data revealed acceptable normality, parametric statistics were employed.

Objective 2: To find out if significant gender differences exist with the measures of Religiosity, and Cultural Identity among Mizo adults.

Table 2. Independent Samples Test between female and male samples

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Religiosity	.045	.833	-1.498	178	.136
			-1.498	177.874	.136
Cultural Identity	.004	.948	-.818	178	.414
			-.818	177.641	.414

Table 2 Independent Samples Test between female and male samples revealed no significant differences ($p < .05$) between males and females with the variables used, therefore Hypothesis 2 is rejected which assumes significant gender differences to exist with the measures used among Mizo Adults.

Objective 3: To find out if a significant relationship exists between the variables of Religiosity and Cultural Identity.

Table 3 Correlation Coefficient revealed no significant relationship between the variables of Cultural Identity and Religiosity; therefore Hypothesis 3 is rejected which assumes a significant relationship to exist between the two variables.

Table 3: Correlations

		Cultural Identity	Religiosity
Cultural Identity	Pearson Correlation	1	-.104
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.300
	N	60	60
Religiosity	Pearson Correlation	-.104	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.300	
	N	60	60

Objective 4: To find out if significant differences exist between the three age groups with the measures of Religiosity, and Cultural Identity among Mizo adults.

Table 4: ANOVA Results for Comparison among Young Adults, Middle-Aged Adults, and Older Adults

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Religiosity	Between Groups	312.433	2	156.217	7.821	.001
Cultural Identity	Between Groups	47.233	2	23.617	.266	.767

Table 4 ANOVA revealed significant differences with the variable of Religiosity ($p < .05$) among the three age groups, therefore Hypothesis 4 is rejected which assumes significant differences to exist among the three age groups with all the variables assessed.

Table 5: Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons among Young Adults, Middle-Aged Adults, and Older Adults

Tukey HSD							
Dependent Variable	(I) Age Groups	(J) Age Groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Religiosity	Young Aged Adults	Middle Aged	-4.6000*	1.4133	.005	-8.001	-1.199
		Old Aged	-5.0500*	1.4133	.002	-8.451	-1.649
	Middle Aged Adults	Young Aged	4.6000*	1.4133	.005	1.199	8.001
		Old Aged	-.4500	1.4133	.946	-3.851	2.951
	Old Aged Adults	Young Aged	5.0500*	1.4133	.002	1.649	8.451
		Middle Aged	.4500	1.4133	.946	-2.951	3.851
Cultural	Young	Middle	2.050	2.977	.771	-5.11	9.21

Identity	Aged Adults	Aged					
		Old Aged	1.650	2.977	.845	-5.51	8.81
	Middle Aged Adults	Young Aged	-2.050	2.977	.771	-9.21	5.11
		Old Aged	-.400	2.977	.990	-7.56	6.76
	Old Aged Adults	Young Aged	-1.650	2.977	.845	-8.81	5.51
		Old Aged	.400	2.977	.990	-6.76	7.56
*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.							

Table 5 presents the results of a Tukey HSD (Honestly Significant Difference) post hoc test, comparing the means of religiosity and cultural identity among three age groups: Young Adults, Middle-Aged Adults, and Older Adults. Significant differences in the variables among the age groups are as follows:

1. Young Adults vs. Middle-Aged Adults:
 - Mean Difference: -4.6000
 - Significance (Sig.): .005
 - 95% Confidence Interval: -8.001 to -1.199
 - Interpretation: Young adults have significantly lower religiosity scores compared to middle-aged adults.

2. Young Adults vs. Older Adults:
 - Mean Difference: -5.0500
 - Significance (Sig.): .002
 - 95% Confidence Interval: -8.451 to -1.649
 - Interpretation: Young adults have significantly lower religiosity scores compared to older adults.

3. Middle-Aged Adults vs. Young Adults:
 - Mean Difference: 4.6000
 - Significance (Sig.): .005
 - 95% Confidence Interval: 1.199 to 8.001
 - Interpretation: Middle-aged adults have significantly higher religiosity scores compared to young adults.

4. Older Adults vs. Young Adults:
 - Mean Difference: 5.0500
 - Significance (Sig.): .002
 - 95% Confidence Interval: 1.649 to 8.451
 - Interpretation: Older adults have significantly higher religiosity scores compared to young adults.

Discussion and Interpretation

Results or data revealed moderately high levels of Religiosity and Cultural Identity, as Mizo society is a conservative culture or society, much substantial research or literature denotes that conservative and collective cultures from developing areas usually have high religiosity and high cultural identity (Malka, A., Lelkes, Y., Srivastava, S., Cohen, A. B., & Miller, D. T. 2012). As Mizo religious tradition or Christian tradition has been muddled or seemed to be mixed with ancient Mizo traditions (Behera, M. N. 2014). It is no surprise that the data revealed moderately high levels on (of) both Religiosity and Cultural Identity.

T-Test revealed no significant gender differences with the variables used, the mean differences between the two genders for the variable of Religiosity is 1.077 and for the variable of Cultural Identity is 1.367. This shows that both genders, males and females are quite religious and have high levels of Cultural Identity with no significant difference. This is an unexpected finding as women are usually significantly higher with regards to the variable of Religiosity (Miller and Hoffmann 1995, Miller and Stark 2002) but that is not the case in the data acquired.

Before the British occupation of Mizoram all sub-tribes of Mizoram were known to have their own religion or 'Sakhua', but researchers have pointed out that the word 'religion' is not an accurate translation for the 'Sakhua' that the Pre-Christian Mizos used to follow, a more accurate translation would be 'tribe spirit'. Each sub-tribe had a 'tribe spirit' that they followed and it gave a special identity to the sub-tribe. The sub-tribes frequently waged war against one another, but as the British occupied the territory peace reigned over, the sub-tribes conglomerated into one tribe and a vacant space for a "new tribe spirit" that would represent or reflect the peace that had beset the land was needed. (Pachau, 2014).

The British missionaries then introduced the 'new tribe spirit' which is Christianity, the British missionaries were ingenious in their introduction of the 'new tribe spirit' as they integrated the tribe elders and leaders as church heads or leaders and integrated the Mizo's indigenous musical instruments and manners to be used in church services. These are clear evidence of how the Mizo's with the help of British Missionaries reoriented the Christian religion to fit the mould of the Mizo identity. (Pachau, 2014).

The absence of a significant correlation between cultural identity and religiosity may stem from various factors. One potential reason is the intricate and multifaceted nature of both cultural identity and religiosity, which encompass diverse dimensions that may not always align perfectly (Al-Ahmadi, 2019). Cultural identity draws influence from elements such as ethnicity, nationality, and social class, whereas religiosity encompasses beliefs, rituals, and spiritual encounters (Smith, 2003). Consequently, individuals might possess a strong cultural identity without necessarily exhibiting high levels of religiosity, or vice-versa.

Furthermore, the historical and socio-cultural backdrop of Mizoram, shaped by forces like colonialism, globalization, and modernization, could contribute to the lack of a significant correlation between cultural identity and religiosity (Pachau, 2014). Shifts in socio-

economic circumstances, educational achievements, and exposure to diverse cultural stimuli may mold individuals' cultural identity and religious convictions in unique ways, leading to variations in their association.

Moreover, methodological considerations, such as the choice of measurement tools for assessing cultural identity and religiosity, might influence the observed correlation. The Cultural Identity Clarity Scale (CICS) and religiosity scales utilized in the study may not fully capture the nuanced aspects of these constructs, potentially resulting in an underestimated relationship (Usborne & Taylor, 2010). In summary, the lack of a significant correlation underscores the complexity of cultural identity and religiosity and highlights the necessity for further research to delve deeper into their interplay. It is crucial to consider the diverse contextual factors at play to gain a comprehensive understanding of these constructs and their relationship.

ANOVA revealed significant differences with the variable of Religiosity ($p < .05$) among the three age groups, where among the three age groups early-aged adults scored the lowest, and late-aged adults scored the highest with the variable of Religiosity among Mizo Adults. The findings follow the norms or majority of the literature, Research conducted by the Pew Research Centre Survey that involved samples from 100 countries and conducted over a decade showed that younger adults are far less likely to be religious than the older generations, this phenomenon is occurring in many different economic and social contexts – in developing countries as well as advanced industrial economies, in Muslim-majority nations as well as predominantly Christian states, and in societies that are, overall, highly religious as well as those that are comparatively secular (Pew Research, 2018). Figure 1 “The means of religiosity among the three age groups” represents how the data is also following the trends worldwide.

Research suggests that the growing non-religious views among younger generations are due to many factors, one major factor being, easy access to alternative views through the internet and also the shifting of community-based centers or places from churches to social medias, even with individualistic cultures the need to belong and the search for meaning is still present but social media and other alternatives have filled that void (Twenge, J. M., Exline, J. J., Grubbs, J. B., Sastry, R., & Campbell, W. K. 2015).

Younger adults are less likely to say they pray daily in 71 of 105 countries and territories for which Pew Research Center survey data are available, while they are more likely to pray daily in two countries (Chad and Liberia). And adults under 40 are less likely to attend religious services on a weekly basis in 53 of 102 countries; the opposite is true in just three countries (Armenia, Liberia and Rwanda), Mizoram seems to be following this trend as well, likely due to globalization, modernization and education (Pew Research, 2018).

The notable differences in religiosity scores among young adults, middle-aged adults, and older adults, as indicated by the Tukey HSD test (table 5), can be explained by various social, cultural, and psychological factors. Younger generations are generally less religious than

older generations due to evolving values and belief systems. Today's young adults are exposed to a wide range of worldviews through the internet and social media, which broadens their beliefs and decreases adherence to traditional religious practices (Twenge, J. M., Campbell, W. K., & Carter, N. T., 2014). As societies modernize and become more secular, religiosity tends to decline, particularly among younger generations. Factors like higher education levels, increased urbanization, and greater individualism contribute to lower religious participation (Norris, P., & Inglehart, R., 2011), which seems to be the case with Mizo Adults as well.

Religiosity often changes across different life stages. Middle-aged and older adults may turn to religion for comfort, community, and meaning, especially when facing mid-life crises, aging, and existential questions. In contrast, young adults are more likely to explore and question their beliefs (Hout, M., & Fischer, C. S., 2014). Older generations often grew up in more religiously homogeneous environments with stronger societal expectations for religious participation. Today's young adults are more likely to live in culturally diverse and pluralistic societies where multiple belief systems coexist, potentially weakening the influence of traditional religion (Putnam, R. D., & Campbell, D. E., 2010).

The widespread use of technology and media among young adults exposes them to various secular and non-religious content, leading to a questioning of traditional religious doctrines and a shift toward more secular or individualized spirituality (Smith, C., & Denton, M. L., 2005).

Limitations

While the current investigation yielded significant findings, it is imperative to acknowledge certain limitations inherent in the study. One notable limitation pertains to the geographic scope of the sampling, which was restricted to only three districts: Aizawl, Lunglei, and Kolasib. This limited geographic coverage raises concerns regarding the homogeneity of the data, as the cultural and demographic characteristics may vary across different districts within Mizoram. Therefore, future research endeavors should strive to obtain samples from all districts of Mizoram to ensure a more comprehensive and representative dataset. Moreover, the sample size of 180 participants, while adequate for certain analyses, may not provide a complete depiction of the true state or levels of the variables under investigation among Mizoram or Mizo adults. A larger and more diversified sample size would enhance the statistical power and generalizability of the findings. Thus, it is recommended that future researchers consider expanding the sample size to capture a broader range of demographic characteristics and cultural nuances within the Mizo population. By doing so, subsequent studies can offer deeper insights into the complex interplay between religiosity and cultural identity in Mizoram.

Conclusions

This study analyzed the levels and relationship between Religiosity and Cultural Identity among Mizo Adults. The samples consisted of N= 180, from three districts of Mizoram Aizawl, Lunglei and Kolasib, divided into three age groups early-aged adults (20-

39 years), middle-aged adults (40-59 years), late-aged adults (60 years and above). 60 participants, 30 males and 30 females from each group. Descriptive statistics revealed moderately high levels among the samples with the measures of Religiosity and Cultural Identity. As the data revealed acceptable normality, parametric statistics were employed. T-test revealed no significant differences ($p < .05$) between males and females. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) revealed significant differences with the variable of Religiosity ($p < .05$) among the three age groups. Post hoc test shows that Mizo young adults have significantly lower religiosity scores compared to Mizo middle-aged and older adults. Mizo Middle-aged and older adults have higher religiosity scores than young adults, with these differences being statistically significant ($p < .05$).

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